Holding of Hijacked Plane at Amritsar Airport

1223. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN:
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Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:—

(a) the minute to minute details of circumstances leading to the taking off the hijacked Indian Airlines plane IC 814 from Amritsar.

(b) the factors responsible for delay in timely action in preventing the plane's take off; and

(c) whether responsibility for causing delay has been fixed; if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Upon refusal of permission to land at Lahore, the hijacked aircraft IC-814 landed at Rajasansi Airport, Amritsar at 1900 hrs. on 24.12.99. The hijackers demanded immediate refuelling. The plane was slowly moving around on the runway and refused to come to the parking bay. The Aerodrome Committee tried a couple of times to engage the hijackers in a dialogue. But the hijackers flatly refused to come on the Radio Telephone (RT). At 1949 hrs., on citing the bowser close to the aircraft, it took off without ATC clearance. When the aircraft landed at Amritsar, concrete and specific information in respect of the numbers, nationality, weaponry, professionalism and commitment of the hijackers was scantly and speculative. On the other hand, messages being received from the hijacked aircraft were tense and demanding. Precipitate action, in the absence of even basic information was judged as being fraught with unacceptable levels of risk.

(b) and (c) On the occurence of the hijacking, institutional mechanisms to deal with situation were immediately put into action. The Crisis Management Group (CMG) and the Central Committee met to address the evolving situation. The NSG Task Force was also placed on full alert. On the basis of available facts, the CMG came to conclusion that the aircraft could not go anywhere unless refuelled. The CMG and others concerned acted in the best possible way under the given situation.